AFRICA RECOVERY

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"I've seen the human suffering and the pain. What is even more difficult is when you see somebody lying there dying who knows that there's medicine somewhere else in the world that can save her, but she can't have it because she's poor and lives in a poor country."

— Kofi Annan
interviewed on BBC World Service
(excerpts on page 4)

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Brazil repaying its 'debt' to Africa

President's tour of Southern Africa strengthens South-South ties

By **Ernest Harsch**

Citing a "political, moral and historical obligation," Brazilian President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva spent a week touring five Southern African countries in early November. Just a year after his inauguration to Brazil's top office, the trip signalled the importance that Africa holds in Brazil's foreign policy under President da Silva.

With a strong base of political support among Brazil's poor and marginalized, the former trade union leader has emphasized that nearly half of the 180 million Brazilians can trace their ancestry directly to Africa. Brazil, Mr. da Silva often points out, has the second largest black population of any country in the world, after Nigeria.

Moreover, as he noted at a state banquet in Mozambique, "Brazilian society was built on the work, the sweat and the blood of Africans," the millions of slaves who were brought to Brazil between the 16th and 19th centuries. For that reason, Brazil "is in debt to Africa" — a debt which the country intends to repay by strengthening its solidarity and cooperation.

One significant expression was the Brazilian president's agreement in Mozambique and Namibia to support the creation of pharmaceutical plants to manufacture generic anti-retroviral medicines (ARVs) which help prolong the lives of people infected with HIV. Brazil has had some success in this field, managing to cut the mortality rate from HIV/AIDS by 50 per cent through the production and distribution of ARVs manufactured in Brazil. "In no other area is our cooperation and solidarity more urgent than in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic," President da Silva said in Namibia.

Projects and plans

In Angola, new agreements were signed in health, education and agriculture. In Namibia, Brazil agreed to train marine and air force personnel. In Mozambique, it signed accords on agriculture, literacy, health and technology, and cancelled the $20 mn debt owed to Brazil. South Africa, which already has a number of agreements with Brazil, signed new ones.

Investment and trade were prominent elements throughout Mr. da Silva's tour. This could be particularly important for Africa, since Brazil has one of the strongest economies among developing countries. By the size of its gross domestic product, it is ranked the twelfth largest in the world. Although the value of its trade with Africa is already about $5 bn annually, this is only about 5 per cent of Brazil's total, so there is scope for expansion.

More than 100 Brazilian business representatives accompanied Mr. da Silva on the tour. In Angola and the island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe, they showed special interest in the oil industry. Now that Angola is at peace, it is planning to double its oil output within the next four years.

Also in Angola, Brazilian companies won contracts for a $150 mn water supply project and explored opportunities in the cellphone, urban transport and timber processing sectors.

Brazilian companies also showed a keen interest in various investment opportunities in Mozambique's Zambezi River valley, which has great potential for agriculture, livestock, forestry and mining. The Brazilian mining giant, Companhia do Vale do Rio Doce, plans to compete for agreements to rehabilitate the Moatize coal mine and the Sena railway, which links the mine to the port of Beira. These projects are valued at some $700 mn.

South should 'be more demanding'

Beyond the immediate benefits for both Brazil and Africa of increasing their mutual ti... President da Silva's trip highlighted gr...ng efforts among leading developing countries to forge stronger solidarity across the South.

About a year ago, India, Brazil and South Africa established a tripartite alliance that focuses on such topics as global agricultural trade and reform of the UN Security Council. The countries' leaders meet frequently — South African President Thabo Mbeki, for example, visited India in October and has met with President da Silva seven times in 2003.

Brazilian President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva with South African President Thabo Mbeki at the end of his trip to Africa.

In addition, Brazil played a leading role in the creation of the developing countries' Group of 21 during the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) talks in Cancún, Mexico, in September. Mr. da Silva's African trip was partly intended to help bolster that group. By acting together, developing countries can have a stronger voice in world fora, he said in Angola. "Developing nations must take a new role, be more demanding."

It is also important for countries of the South to trade more with each other, he added. He is pressing Mercosur, the customs union of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, to complete talks on freer trade with both the Southern African Customs Union and the Southern African Development Community.

Such initiatives, noted President Mbeki during his Brazilian counterpart's visit, are in the spirit of the continent's economic framework, the New Partnership for Africa's Development. "We count on Brazil," Mr. Mbeki said, "as an important partner in the process of the renewal of the African continent." ■

AIDS: a 'real weapon of mass destruction'

UN Secretary-General urges greater action

Late last year, UN Secretary-General spoke to the ***British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*** *about the global struggle against HIV/AIDS. The interview was broadcast on World Service Radio and posted on BBC's website on 28 November. The full interview can be heard at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3244564.stm. The transcribed excerpts below are reproduced with permission of the BBC. They have been edited slightly for clarity.*

BBC: I want to start by asking you about the enemy. When did you first realize what a serious enemy you were up against with AIDS?

Annan: I think it was when I discussed the issue with the World Health Organization [WHO] and UNAIDS [the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS] and looked at the figures and the statistics and the devastation it was causing in many African countries, and at the attitude of the leaders. We needed leadership. We needed leadership at all levels. But it was most important to get the presidents and the prime ministers speaking up and that was not happening. I thought we should do whatever we can to raise awareness and to get them involved.

BBC: Have you been out there on the ground talking to sufferers?

Annan: I've been out there on the ground talking to sufferers..... I've seen the situation in parts of Africa where I've visited AIDS patients in villages, where you see a grandmother and lots of grandchildren but no mother, no father.... I've also lost some very close friends, including people who worked here in the UN, and that also hits you. For me it's not statistics. I've seen the human suffering and the pain.

What is even more difficult is when you see somebody lying there dying who knows that there's medication and medicine somewhere else in the world that can save her, but she can't have it because she's poor and lives in a poor country. Where is our common humanity? How do you explain to her that in certain parts of the world AIDS is a disease that can be treated, that one can live with and function, but in her particular situation it's a death sentence. It's a tough one.....

I feel angry, I feel distressed, I feel helpless to live in a world where we have the means, we have the resources, to be able to help all these patients, and what is lacking is the political will. How do you generate that political will to ensure that assistance reaches them? And of course with somebody like myself who tries to speak for the poor and the voiceless, you sort of feel you're failing, you're not getting enough done.

BBC: What more can you do, though?

Annan: I think we should continue our efforts to mobilize the societies to play a role. We should get the leaders to speak out against discrimination, the stigma that is attached to it. We need resources. We need resources to assist these people. We are operating at a relatively low level. We estimate that by 2005 we will need $10 bn worldwide per annum to fight the disease.

BBC: But that money is not forthcoming, is it? The Global Fund [to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria] has been able to hand out $2 bn over two years. You're miles short. Does that make you feel that there's some failure on your part?

Annan: Failure on my part and insensitivity on the part of those with power and the resources — insensitivity on the part of those who should develop the political will to do it..... [We need] to raise the level of contribution to the Global Fund, which has to date given grants to about 93 countries. Wherever I go, they tell me how helpful this has been, and of course they are all looking for additional support. If we do not replenish the funds and the Global Fund were to fail, I think it would be a very serious indictment of the leadership in the world today.

BBC: We talked about what you want from the developed world. Now let's talk about the leadership in those countries faced with epidemics emerging. What's the problem with leadership? Why isn't it coming?

Annan: Some refuse to talk about this because of cultural reasons. We had a situation where one African leader was going to give a speech — I don't want to embarrass him by naming him — and the speech was prepared for him, where he was urged to encourage young people and the population to use condoms to protect themselves. He said, "I can't utter the word condoms, I'm the father of the nation. You can't ask me to encourage the youth to be promiscuous." But this is saving lives.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan (right) visiting Matola Health Centre in Mozambique. In the middle is the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, Stephen Lewis.

BBC: And is that what you said to him?

Annan: Yes.... I spoke to another African leader who was also entirely against the use of condoms and said, "Mr. Secretary-General, we don't want to associate you with the word condoms. You shouldn't even be using that word or speaking about it." I said, "Mr. President, I've even written to the Pope about it to see how we can work with the Catholic Church on prevention, on education, on treatment and care." And he looked at me and said, "Mr. Secretary-General, when it comes to condoms, the Pope and I are one." I said, "Mr. President, but your people are dying. We're talking about saving lives. This is a very serious business — and God will understand."

Activists of the AIDS Therapeutic Treatment Now group protest in Durban, South Africa, to demand provision of anti-retroviral drugs.

BBC: Did you change his mind?

Annan: I didn't. And this is the frustration. These are the painful experiences you sometimes have to go through. And then if I walk away to see one of the dying patients and they were to look up and say, "Help me — get our president and the leaders to help us." You can't tell them the attitude of their president.

BBC: It's very hard, isn't it, because a lot of the groups most affected by AIDS are very marginalized groups anyway.... People who are marginalized can't speak up for themselves. If their governments aren't going to speak up for them, then who is?

Annan: This is the real test. This is why I speak out as often as I can. But I think we need to also get civil society [involved]. NGOs have been very effective partners and they've been active in sometimes embarrassing and pushing the governments to do the right thing.

We've seen women's organizations at the grassroots level, and this is very important because today in Africa, AIDS has a woman's face. Over 50 per cent of the infected are women and often they are the innocent victims. We really need to empower the women to take care of themselves and get the young people involved. And I have seen countries where the campaign is mounted by the head of state and it goes down all the way to the village level.

In Senegal, for example, they are even using griots — a griot is an oral historian — to talk to the people about it. We visited them a couple of years ago and my wife asked this woman griot, "Are you embarrassed to talk about sex and all these things frankly to the people in their village?" She said, "This is death. There is no embarrassment in death. There is no embarrassment in trying to save lives." And it's that kind of spirit that I want to see in the African leaders and the leaders around the world whose populations are threatened. I want to see them adopt the attitude of this griot.... She was very inspirational.

'I'm talking to people over the heads of their governments. They should take on this fight. They should not be afraid to speak up. They should not be afraid to challenge their governments to do something about the epidemic.'

BBC: Are you winning the war?

Annan: Well, I would wish to think so, but I'm not. I'm really not winning the war. I'm not winning the war because I don't think the leaders of the world are engaged enough. I also appeal to communities and societies everywhere to become engaged in the struggle. They cannot leave it to their leaders alone.

BBC: So in a way you're talking to the people over the heads of their governments.

Annan: I'm talking to people over the heads of their governments. They should take on this fight. They should not be afraid to speak up. They should not be afraid to challenge their governments to do something about the epidemic. It is their lives. It is the lives of their children, their sisters, their mothers and their brothers and fathers. And they have the right to demand support. They have the right to demand action from leaders whose main and major responsibility, after all, is to ensure the safety and welfare of their people.

I'm also hoping that the world will wake up.... In some of the countries we are talking about, AIDS is the real weapon of mass destruction, and what are we doing about that?

BBC: Some say there was a tragic missed opportunity. That the world was gearing itself up to tackle AIDS. But then on September 11 the twin towers came down, the attack on the Pentagon and the whole world changed. It became the war on terrorism. Is that how you see it?

Annan: Let me put it this way. I hope if we had not had 9/11, many more resources would have gone to AIDS. But I can't be sure. I can't be sure because I have seen other situations where it has not happened.

BBC: Three million people, we think, died of AIDS this year — 2 million of them in Africa.... As an African . . . does that feel like injustice?

Annan: It is worse than that. It does feel like injustice, but it also indicates a certain incredible callousness that one would not have expected in the 21st century.

BBC: And how will history judge us for what you describe as this incredible callousness?

Annan: Harshly. Very harshly. And I don't think we will have any defence. ■

Toll mounts in global AIDS pandemic

Lacking drugs, doctors and solidarity, Africa counts its dead

By *Michael Fleshman*

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continued its deadly assault on sub-Saharan Africa in 2003, taking an estimated 2.3 million lives, infecting an additional 3 million people, and continuing its relentless spread in all but a very few countries. With education and prevention programmes starved for funds, access to medications limited to the very rich or the very fortunate and victimization of the infected all too common, Africa and the international community failed to halt the spread of the disease, or ease the suffering and economic and social devastation it has wrought.

The grim findings are contained in an epidemic update released on 25 November by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The report confirms that Africa remains the epicentre of the global crisis, accounting for almost 80 per cent of the 3 million fatalities worldwide and over 60 per cent of the 5 million new infections.

Despite increased spending on HIV/AIDS programmes and improved responses by many governments, noted UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot, "our current global efforts remain entirely inadequate for an epidemic that is continuing to spiral out of control." The rapid spread of the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS in Eastern Europe, South and Central Asia and other areas with low infection rates, he said, meant that governments in those regions "can either act now" to contain the disease "or pay later — as Africa is now having to pay" — in lives and lost development.

African women hardest hit

Although adult infection rates vary widely in Africa, from less than 1 per cent in Mauritania to nearly 40 per cent in Botswana and Swaziland, Southern Africa remains by far the worst affected. The region includes just 2 per cent of the world's population but accounts for fully 30 per cent of all HIV infections. Women aged 15-24 now comprise the majority of new infections in Africa, and are more than twice as likely to contract the virus as young men.

The news is better in Uganda, where years of aggressive education and prevention programmes saw infection rates in the capital, Kampala, drop to 8 per cent, down from 30 per cent a decade ago. A similar approach helped Senegal keep its infection rate stable at about 1 per cent, although rising rates among commercial sex workers in urban areas leave no grounds for complacency. There are positive developments in Southern Africa too, with South Africa set to join Botswana in providing treatment for HIV and AIDS through the public health system — including anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) that attack the virus itself. Infection rates in Zambia and Malawi appear to have levelled off — although at alarmingly high levels.

A 9-year-old South African prays before taking her anti-retroviral medicines.

HIV/AIDS in Africa and the world
(in millions)

	Global	Africa	Africa as % of total
Total HIV infections:	40	26.6	66.5
2003 HIV infections:	5	3.2	64.0
2003 Fatalities:	3	2.3	76.6
Percentage of population infected by HIV	1.1	8.0	

ARV treatment	Requiring treatment	Receiving treatment
Sub-Saharan Africa:	4.1 million	50,000
In all developing countries:	6.0 million	300,000

Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNAIDS and WHO data

New tools lower estimates

But UNAIDS cautions that the stabilization of infection rates in Southern Africa in particular is misleading — reflecting not a reduction of new infections, but an increase in deaths. In Zambia, for example, the number of new infections was matched by the number of AIDS fatalities in 2003, keeping statistics on infection rates steady as older victims died.

The statistical problem is exacerbated this year by changes in the way UNAIDS and the World Health Organization (WHO) calculate figures on the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Improved data collection and analytical tools have led these organizations to lower their estimates of infection rates and deaths in 2003 compared to those published in previous years. Under the new system, the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS, calculated to be 40 million, *actually reflects the midpoint* between the lowest estimate of people infected, 34 million, and the highest, 46 million. Similarly, the number of African fatalities for 2003, set at 2.3 million, actually represents estimates of between 2.2 million and 2.4 million. The range is much narrower for deaths because of the greater availability and reliability of mortality records.

These changes give the appearance that the global epidemic stabilized or even improved over the past year. Regrettably, the lower figures reflect only the changes in data collection and analysis. When researchers apply the new methods to previous years, the report emphasizes, they find a steady increase over time in both infection and mortality rates.

More than 20 years after the first case of AIDS was diagnosed, "The most devastating social and economic impacts of AIDS are still to come," cautioned Dr. Piot. Initiatives like WHO's drive to provide 3 million people with ARVs by 2005, combined with expanded education and prevention campaigns, an end to discrimination against people with HIV and much wider use of a simple treatment to prevent mother-to-child infections, he said, would go far to mitigate the worst of those impacts. But to date the world has failed to provide the $10 bn annually that an effective response to the disease would cost. At present rates of infection, the cost of an effective global response to the disease will rise to $15 bn by 2007. ■

New WTO proposals stir controversy

"Singapore issues" could undermine local enterprises in Africa

By **Gumisai Mutume**
Cancun

On the way to industrialization, developed countries utilized a number of state intervention measures. These included favouring local over foreign companies, directing investment towards certain sectors and restricting market competition for the benefit of domestic enterprises. However, under a highly controversial set of proposed new agreements at the World Trade Organization (WTO), industrial nations are seeking to end many such arrangements, denying developing countries the option of using them.

Known simply as the "Singapore issues," the proposals are emerging as thorny obstacles to the current round of trade negotiations, pitting developing against industrial nations. Disagreements over the four issues — trade and investment, trade and competition policy, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation — contributed to the collapse of a crucial WTO meeting in Cancún, Mexico, in September (see *Africa Recovery*, October 2003).

Agricultural processing factory in Côte d'Ivoire: to be able to industrialize, African countries want the same kind of domestic protection measures that developed countries have utilized

At present, a country may grant preferences to domestic companies by taxing them less or allowing them to utilize domestic distribution channels barred to foreign firms. However, "proponents of the Singapore issues in the WTO would particularly target these and other similar flexibilities," warns former Indian Ambassador to the WTO Bhagirath Lal Das. His country leads a group of mainly developing countries, many of them in Africa, that are opposed to launching negotiations on the Singapore issues at the WTO as part of the current round.

Kicking away the ladder

"The large industrial economies had effective protection from competition long after their industry took root, through explicit or informal rules, or from being first into a market," notes Mr. Bill Rosenberg, a trade and investment analyst from New Zealand. "That greatly helped their development."

Japan's highly restrictive policies on foreign direct investment are well-known. It began relaxing them during the 1960s, allowing a maximum of 50 per cent foreign ownership in 33 industries where Japanese firms were already well established. Full foreign ownership was permitted in only 17 sectors where Japanese companies had achieved a dominant position at home and a strong foothold abroad.

Having had a head-start, industrial countries are now "proposing to kick away the ladder they used, to prevent other countries from ascending it," says Mr. Rosenberg.

The four issues, pushed mainly by the European Union (EU) and Japan, were first brought up for negotiation at the WTO during a ministerial conference in Singapore in 1996. (Ministerial conferences are the WTO's highest decision-making gatherings and are held every two years.) Industrial nations pushed for agreements that would be binding on all WTO members. But many developing countries refused, unconvinced of the need for increasing their WTO obligations and wary of the possible consequences to their development policies. Many were more concerned about ironing out outstanding issues from the previous round of trade talks, the Uruguay Round, concluded in 1994. A compromise was reached, with the Singapore conference agreeing to set up four working groups to study and clarify the new issues. Since then, pressure to transform the study groups into negotiating committees has been growing.

The first Singapore issue, a proposed trade and investment agreement, seeks to expand the rights of foreign investors. The second, on trade and competition, would regulate "hard core" cartels and require the creation of national rules to ensure free competition among foreign and domestic companies. Trade facilitation, the third proposal, involves establishing rules to simplify and lower the costs of customs procedures. Under the fourth proposed agreement, on transparency in government procurement, member states would be required to publicly announce bids for supplies purchases and allow competition between domestic and foreign companies seeking to provide them.

Developing countries regard the first two issues as potentially damaging. "Many countries still do not see the need or the use for a multilateral agreement on investment or competition, while many can see the benefit of agreements on transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation," says Dr. Youssef Boutros-Ghali, Egypt's trade minister. But, he says, even the latter two agreements "have to be drafted so as to take into account the capacities, constraints and needs of developing countries."

Trade and investment

The push for a single multilateral agreement on foreign investment comes at a time when international capital flows are rapidly increasing. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows rose from $203 bn in 1990 to $735 bn in 2001. While FDI may stimulate economic growth, countries often attempt to ensure that it falls in line with national development goals and does not undermine local enterprise. In 1962, the UN acknowledged the right of states to regulate the behaviour of foreign investors. According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), more than 2,100 bilateral

(government to government) treaties currently regulate FDI flows.

It is common for countries to support the development of local industry, for instance, by offering incentives to domestic companies. Some have regulations restricting foreign ownership of certain "strategic" sectors such as the media, telecommunications, aviation and atomic energy. Others require joint ventures with domestic companies, the hiring of local workers, restrictions on remittances and mandatory technology transfers, to maximize the benefits of foreign investment.

Proponents of liberalization argue that such regulations impede the free flow of capital. And as international investors aggressively seek to set up shop in countries that offer the best returns, there is pressure to erode many such national measures. Most current investment agreement proposals aim to remove regulatory practices perceived as discriminating against foreign investors in the host countries, notes Mr. Kavalji Singh, director of the India-based Public Interest Research Centre. Recently, he says, there have been several efforts to establish multilateral policies on investment, most notably the failed attempt by the industrialized countries' Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the 1990s to negotiate a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (see box, next page).

include meeting production or export quotas or purchasing inputs locally. Critics of the WTO proposal say eliminating such measures would reduce the ability of governments to utilize investment for national development goals.

Yet many industrial nations have benefited from similar measures. When car maker Nissan established a plant in the UK, it was on condition that 60 per cent of the value of the goods it made would come from local inputs, a proportion that would eventually rise to 80 per cent.

"Our strongest arguments still remain that the WTO is not the right forum, that the traditional WTO principles of non-discrimination, particularly national treatment [equal treatment for both foreign and domestic industry] are not appropriate for a development policy-related issue like investment," says India's Industry Minister Arun Jaitley. "Trade negotiators are not the right people to deal with movements of capital that have dynamics of their own."

Daimler-Chrysler auto plant in South Africa: New WTO proposals seek to minimize regulation of foreign companies.

Easing regulation

The proposed WTO agreement on investment would seek to reduce controls known as performance requirements, conditions that foreign companies must meet if they are to continue operating in a given country. These may

Governments opposed to a WTO investment agreement are also concerned about signing away power over domestic policies to foreign corporations. Transnational corporations are generally large, some with assets greater than the economies of entire countries. Belief that some corporations now wield more power than many developing countries is fuelling concerns about how to regulate them. An often cited example is the investment agreement signed by Canada, Mexico and the US under the North American Free Trade Agreement. The agreement confers unprecedented powers to foreign investors and all three governments have either been forced to reverse domestic policy decisions or face suits by foreign investors.

Some countries that are reluctant to enter into a WTO investment agreement argue that they have already done a lot to improve their investment climates. Between 1991 and 2001, for instance, more than 95 per cent of the 1,400 regulatory changes to national investment policies were aimed at creating a more favourable environment for FDI, reports UNCTAD. The majority of these were carried out autonomously. "Today, nearly all countries have removed entry restrictions and limitations on foreign equity shares in manufacturing," concurs Mr. Richard Newfarmer, a World Bank economic advisor.

Trade and competition policy

Those calling for a WTO agreement on competition policy would like it to regulate hard core cartels, which they blame for anti-competitive practices such as price-fixing. It would also restrict monopolies, mergers (that limit competition) and arrangements between suppliers and distributors that close out markets from other competitors. It is estimated that developing countries bought products worth $11 bn annually from cartels during the 1990s. The WTO notes that these cartels often mark up the price of their products by between 10 and 45 per cent. In a submission to the WTO study group on competition, the EU notes that it envisages an agreement that places an "obligation for WTO members to enact in their domestic competition law a ban on hard core cartels."

But, says Ms. Cecilia Oh of the Ghana-based Third World Network-Africa, there is no generally accepted definition of a hard core cartel. Also, the assumption that all such cartels have an adverse impact on development is questionable. "The experience of some Asian countries in which cartelization was, for a time, an element of their industrial policies, challenges this assumption," says Ms. Oh. In addition "nearly all developed countries have had exemptions on the basis of overriding economic or public interest grounds." Some governments also allow cooperation by small or medium-sized enterprises to counteract the market power of a dominant company. At various stages, countries such as Korea encouraged various cartel arrangements and mergers among domestic companies in order to compete against the might of Western firms.

Meanwhile, industrial countries maintain policies that shelter their own companies from foreign competition, in direct conflict with standing WTO rules. Only under threat of economic retaliation by the EU did US President George Bush lift tariffs on steel

imports in December. He had imposed them 21 months earlier to shelter US producers from foreign competitors and "give the industry a chance to adjust to the surge in foreign imports," he said.

India's industry minister, Mr. Jaitley, says countries at different stages of development view competition issues differently, based on the effects they have on their economies. He believes agreement on these issues can only occur between countries at similar stages of development, and that WTO membership is too diverse to allow a framework that would be suitable for all.

Transparency in government procurement

An agreement on government procurement already exists within the WTO. It was originally negotiated during earlier trade talks in the 1970s. However, it is one of only four WTO agreements known as "plurilateral" — they only bind willing participants. Just 28 WTO members, mainly industrial nations, signed onto the existing agreement. Only they are required to treat foreign and domestic suppliers of government purchases equally. Current attempts to establish a new agreement are aimed at extending some of the existing provisions to all WTO member countries.

The current agreement also requires member countries to ensure that adequate information on procurement is made available and decisions are taken fairly. "It requires publication of laws, regulations, judicial decisions, administrative rulings and notices of invitation to participate in covered procurement," writes Mr. Joseph Finger, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC. Developing countries fear that if the agreement were extended to them, they would have to establish new bureaucratic procedures and enact new legislation, both burdensome and costly.

Discussions in the WTO study group currently focus on the scope and definition of government procurement, what, if any, exemptions would be extended to developing countries and issues of technical assistance for poorer countries. The chairman of the group reports that most developing countries say they lack sufficient skills to properly negotiate an agreement in this area and are requesting clarity on its implications before participating.

Trade facilitation

The proposed agreement on trade facilitation seeks to cut red tape at the borders by simplifying import, export and customs procedures. It also aims to increase transparency, for instance by requiring the publication of trade regulations. UNCTAD estimates that the average customs transaction is handled by 20-30 different parties, requiring at least 40 documents and the re-input of 60-70 per cent of all data. As global tariffs begin to fall under the WTO's international trade rules, it is becoming apparent that at times the cost of complying with customs formalities is exceeding that of the duties on a product. Consumers end up paying higher prices.

Many developing countries broadly support the objectives of the trade facilitation agreement, but are unprepared for new legal commitments that would stretch their already limited resources. They also disagree with their industrial counterparts over how trade facilitation measures would be framed under the proposed agreement. For instance, many oppose an agreement that would bind them to dispute settlement — a WTO procedure for settling violations that is legally binding and that can recommend compensation or trade sanctions.

Mounting pressure

Since the Singapore ministerial meeting in 1996, pressure to launch negotiations on these issues, especially from the EU and Japan, has been growing. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi says agreements on the Singapore issues would benefit all, including developing countries, by establishing uniform rules in these areas while also allowing for enough policy space for development. "Our aim is to maximize the benefits of globalization and minimize its negative effects," he says. "That is because globalization with rules is far better than globalization without."

At the WTO's 2001 ministerial conference in Doha, Qatar, developing countries, led by India, continued to argue against launching negotiations on the Singapore issues. The disagreement almost resulted in the collapse of the Doha meeting and a failure to launch a new round of trade negotiations. At the last minute, developing countries conceded, on condition that negotiations on the new issues would only begin "on the basis of a decision to be taken, by explicit consensus," in Cancún.

The September 2003 ministerial meeting in Cancún marked the mid-point of the Doha round. Despite the round being dubbed the Doha Development Agenda, poor countries noted that deadlines on all the issues of primary importance to them had been missed. Indeed, subsidies in agriculture were still on the rise, despite promises by industrial nations to reduce them. A grouping of 70 developing countries, led by Malaysia and including many African countries, refused to give the go-ahead to launch negotiations on the new issues, contributing to the impasse in Cancún.

Botswana's Trade Minister Jacob Nkate warned in Cancún that there was a need for "realism and pragmatism, given the complexity of these issues and the limited institutional, human and technical capacities in most of our countries." Speaking on behalf of the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of countries, Mr. Nkate called on the WTO to "continue the clarification and study processes in these areas in order to enable us to have a deeper understanding." ■

Collapse of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment

During the 1990s, big capital-exporting countries intensified efforts to establish a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a grouping of rich countries. Negotiations began in 1995. Once completed, the agreement would also be open to a number of developing countries, which were invited to participate as observers.

But the talks came under intense global criticism by non-governmental organizations and trade unions, which charged that the agreement would undermine domestic policies, threaten the environment and work against fair labour practices. Opponents argued that rich countries, which had benefited from protectionist investment regimes in the past, were now seeking to remove such regulations, impeding the development prospects of poor countries.

While at the beginning there was general consensus among OECD countries about the need for such an agreement, a number of differences soon emerged among them. For instance, while the EU and Canada preferred negotiations to be moved to the WTO where the agreement would be provided with a legally binding dispute settlement mechanism, the US did not. The negotiations eventually collapsed in November 1998.

Farmers embrace African 'miracle' rice

High-yielding 'Nerica' varieties to combat hunger and rural poverty

By **Ernest Harsch**

When drought came two years ago to Zaguiguia, in western Côte d'Ivoire, only one variety of rice grew well, the New Rice for Africa (Nerica). The next season all the farmers in the region wanted Nerica seeds, but not enough were available, says Albertine Kpassa, a local farmer. In Saioua, in the central part of the country, another woman farmer, Elise Digbeu Ori, prefers Nerica because it matures early, bringing in quick income. "That means a lot," she says, "because I have six children, and all are in school."

In the neighbouring country of Guinea, where the first Nerica varieties were introduced in 1997, Mamady Douno cultivates a rice field in Maferenya. "Since I started to grow this rice, I no longer buy rice on the market," the father of 10 told a local reporter. "With Nerica, I can feed my family, pay my kids' school fees and be sure of having food all year."

On a continent where the struggle to grow enough food is often a challenge and a staggering one-third of the population is undernourished, farmers in nearly a dozen countries in West and Central Africa are now achieving bountiful rice harvests. They are growing not only enough to feed their families, but also sizeable surpluses to sell in the markets.

Nerica — originally developed by scientists of the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA), an intergovernmental rice research centre — is a cross between an ancient, hardy African rice variety and a high-yielding Asian variety. It combines features of both: resistance to drought and pests, higher yields even with little irrigation or fertilizer, and more protein content than other types of rice.

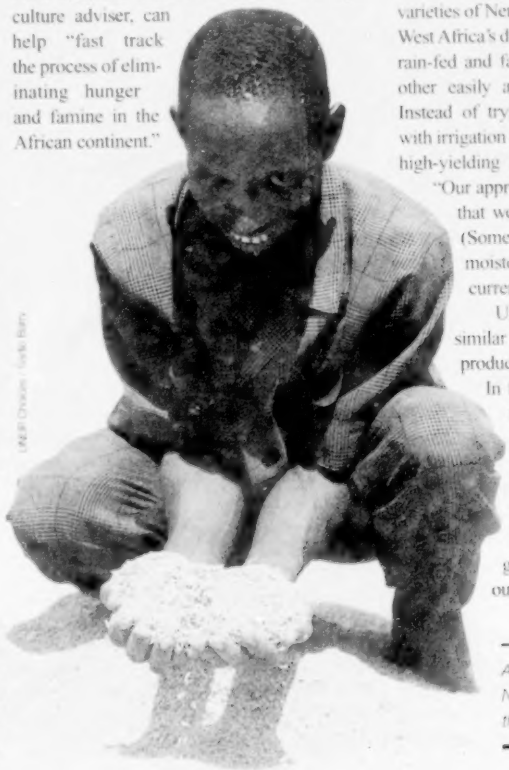
Quite simply, "It is a miracle crop," WARDA Director-General Kanayo Nwanze told *Africa Recovery*. He was interviewed during the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (29 September–1 October), at which Nerica featured prominently.

On the NEPAD 'fast track'

For West Africa, where rice is a staple food, the implications of greater local production are enormous. To meet consumption needs, the region currently must import about 3.5 mn tonnes of rice a year, at a cost of nearly $1 bn. Greater domestic production could save African countries scarce foreign exchange. This year, Guinea alone may save about $13 mn.

But, as Mr. Nwanze pointed out during a visit to Nigeria, the widespread adoption of Nerica will mean more than just increased rice production and reduced imports. "It will mean more food on each household's table and more money in the farmers' pockets. This will in turn contribute to food security and poverty reduction."

Nerica's potential has been recognized by the promoters of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the broad development plan adopted by the continent's leaders in 2001. The NEPAD Steering Committee has identified Nerica as one of the continent's "best practices" and has endorsed the goal of expanding its use in West and Central Africa and extending it to East and Southern Africa as well, as part of a wider effort to boost agricultural production and food security (see page 13). Nerica, says Prof. Richard Mkandawire, NEPAD's agriculture adviser, can help "fast track the process of eliminating hunger and famine in the African continent."



UNEP Photo – Ivan Bart

A Nerica farmer in Guinea. Nerica yields are 2-3 times higher than those of standard rice varieti

Best of both worlds

Thanks to the groundbreaking work of Mr. Monty Jones, a scientist from Sierra Leone who found innovative ways to crossbreed standard African and Asian rice varieties, WARDA — also known as the African Rice Centre — was able to develop this new type of rice (see box, next page). When Nerica was first tested in research fields in Côte d'Ivoire in 1994-95, Mr. Nwanze explains, WARDA discovered that the new variety successfully "combined the best of the Asian rice with the best of the African rice."

Nerica is not just one variety, Mr. Nwanze points out. There are actually about 3,000 different Nerica varieties, although farmers currently are using only about 10 of them. The preferred varieties share some common features.

Reflecting the characteristics of African rice varieties that have evolved over millennia in the continent's difficult environmental conditions, Nerica is very hardy, resistant to stresses such as drought, common rice diseases and pests. The varieties of Nerica now in use are most suited to West Africa's dry "uplands," which are primarily rain-fed and far from lowland river valleys or other easily accessible sources of irrigation. Instead of trying to modify the environment with irrigation and fertilizer to meet the needs of high-yielding Asian rices, says Mr. Nwanze, "Our approach was to provide technologies that were adapted to the environment. (Some new Nerica varieties, suited to moister lowland river valleys, are also currently being tested in Burkina Faso.)

Unlike traditional African rice, but similar to the Asian varieties, Nerica produces significantly bigger harvests. In fact, it yields more than either of the two parent varieties. Each panicle (branch cluster) of the African rice has about 100 grains. Each panicle of the Asian variety has 250. But Nerica panicles hold an average of 400 grains. That means that even without inputs, Nerica can yield 1.5

2.5 tonnes of rice per hectare, compared with an average of 1 tonne or less for traditional varieties. In fields in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, even very modest applications of fertilizer have boosted the output to 3.5 tonnes per hectare.

Each grain of Nerica rice also has more protein than either of the parents. While the old varieties have a protein content of about 8-10 per cent, Nerica can reach 10-12 per cent.

Nerica matures considerably faster. From planting to harvest generally takes 90-100 days, compared with 120-140 days for upland Asian rice varieties used in West Africa. That not only allows farmers to earn money sooner from their market sales, but also to use the time saved to plant other crops.

In its early stages, Nerica grows profusely, close to the ground, like the indigenous African varieties. Known as tillering, this process enables Nerica to successfully crowd out weed development.

A boon to women

Previously, notes Mr. Nwanze, there was very little research into improving upland rices. "People said they were very marginal, very unproductive, so why waste time trying to develop technologies for them?" But with about 70 per cent of West Africa's 20 million rice farmers growing upland rice — and a majority of them women — WARDA decided that it was vital to focus on this "particular sector of society that was neglected, women farmers, small-scale poor farmers."

In Guinea, Nerica has been especially popular with women farmers, who have seen significant increases in their rice harvests and incomes. The government's national coordination office for Nerica encourages women to establish producer unions to help disseminate the new variety, provide training and manage seed stocks.

Beyond its high output, Nerica is also valued by women for several other features. The fact that it matures more quickly than standard rice varieties permits the women's associations to cultivate other crops. In a number of rural communities in Guinea they are planting niébé, a variety of bean that grows within two months and restores nutrients to fields cultivated with Nerica.

Nerica's ability to reduce weed growth, notes Mr. Nwanze, is also "very important to women farmers, because out of their total labour input into rice production, weeding took about 40-60 per cent" of their rice cultivation efforts. "Now you can see that women spend less time weeding."

Farmer participation

Beyond the scientific innovations that produced Nerica, WARDA has also been experimenting with new ways of popularizing and disseminating the crop — through the active engagement of farmers themselves. This has meant breaking with the standard, top-down practices of agricultural extension services in Africa, which often simply tell farmers which crops and varieties they should adopt.

In 1996, WARDA decided that it would be best if farmers drew their own conclusions about Nerica by comparing it directly with other varieties, through a three-year process known as "participatory varietal selection." During the first year, WARDA and national extension

Persistence, innovation and coconut milk

It took hard work to make the Nerica breakthrough possible, notes Mr. Kanayo Nwanze, director-general of the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA). He gives much of the credit for this development to the "father of Nerica," Mr. Monty Jones, a scientist from Sierra Leone. In 1991, Mr. Jones began working in the rice centre's laboratories and test fields to successfully cross two strains of rice, known by their scientific names as oryza glaberrima (from Africa) and oryza sativa (from Asia).

Mr. Kanayo Nwanze

Oryza glaberrima is an ancient variety, and is believed to have been first cultivated in parts of West Africa some 3,500 years ago. This African rice, explains Mr. Nwanze, "was more like a weedy grass. It didn't yield very much. The grains shattered when they matured."

About 450 years ago, Portuguese travellers first introduced the Asian rice, oryza sativa, which was higher yielding and gradually displaced African varieties in lowland rice-growing areas. Improved versions of Asian rice also were promoted in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s as part of efforts to export Asia's "green revolution" to the continent. But those efforts failed, in part because the higher-yielding Asian rices depended on significant inputs, especially irrigation and fertilizer, and were vulnerable to Africa's harsh weather conditions and poor soils. They were "not adapted to the African environment," Mr. Nwanze told *Africa Recovery*.

Only about 7 per cent of Africa's arable land is irrigated, and most African rice farms traditionally depend on rainfall. They also are poor, and cannot afford to install irrigation systems or buy much fertilizer. So as rice consumption increased, local production lagged and countries had to import increasing quantities of rice.

Rather than trying to "adapt" the African environment to Asian rice varieties by developing costly irrigation systems, WARDA's scientists took a different approach. They focused on improving indigenous rice varieties that were already well suited to African conditions, by combining with them the high-yield characteristics of Asian rice.

Of the thousand or so African rice varieties in WARDA's seed banks, they selected one of the most common, oryza glaberrima. After years of work, they had some successes in crossing it with oryza sativa, but also encountered a big obstacle: about 90 per cent of the offspring, known as "progeny," were infertile. That meant that while farmers might grow the new variety, they would not be able to save any seeds for planting next year's crop — they would have to buy new seeds.

Mr. Jones concentrated on a technique known as "embryo rescue," in which the embryo is removed from a progeny and placed in a culture to change its characteristics. After travelling to China, he discovered that adding coconut milk to the culture worked especially well in reducing the sterility of WARDA's new crossed varieties. "So, Eureka!" Mr. Nwanze exclaimed. "Coconut milk was the trick. That was how he achieved stable progenies."

Mr. Nwanze, aware of public concerns about genetic modification of plants and other living organisms, adds that WARDA's method of producing Nerica involves "very simple bio-technology." There is no transfer of genes from one species to another, but rather the crossing of different varieties of the same species. Such crossbreeding occurs in nature, and farmers often experiment on their own to develop new crossbreeds. WARDA's contribution is to apply modern scientific methods to such a process.

Moreover, notes Ms. Susan McCouch of the Rockefeller Foundation's Rice Biotechnology Programme, the development of new varieties such as Nerica can "significantly increase global biodiversity in rice."

Since Nerica rice has a shorter growing cycle, it saves labour time of the farmers who grow it, most of whom are women.

agency staff establish a "rice garden" in a target village, often in the field of a leading farmer. The garden includes many different kinds of rice: Nerica, improved Asian varieties, indigenous African varieties and others that have been popular locally or regionally. Local farmers are encouraged to visit the field and monitor the growth of the different varieties.

At the end of the season, farmers are then asked to select five varieties and are given seeds for use in their own fields the next year. When that harvest comes in, they are asked to narrow the selection down to three. But this time, Mr. Nwanze explains, "we tell them that if they are really interested, they'll have to buy the seed. That's the test. If a farmer is willing to pay for seed, it's an indication of interest."

WARDA discovered that as farmers grew the different varieties in their own fields, they came to appreciate Nerica's particular qualities. They also helped spread the word among other farmers. "This was a process in which farmers were not only in the driver's seat, telling us what they preferred about the varieties," observes Mr. Nwanze. "But they also became extension agents themselves — their neighbours and relations came to ask for seeds."

According to Mr. Gordon Conway, president of the US-based Rockefeller Foundation, which has helped fund WARDA's work on Nerica, standard top-down extension approaches are inappropriate in Africa because of the continent's great ecological diversity. WARDA, he says, "has brilliantly combined the high science of biotechnology with an approach that creates a central role for farmer participation."

Based on its experiences in Guinea and western Côte d'Ivoire, WARDA then took this participatory approach a step further, by promoting the establishment of community-based seed systems. Traditionally, farmers often save seeds from their harvest to grow next year's crop, but mainly for their own fields. Under the new system (adapted from a method developed in Senegal), farmers who are interested in becoming specialized seed producers are trained how to select the best panicles for seed stocks and how to prepare, store and maintain the seeds. These farmers can then earn additional income by selling the seeds to other farmers — and in the process further expand and speed the dissemination of Nerica varieties.

African Rice Initiative

With the goal of spreading Nerica's initial successes to other countries, WARDA and its partners decided in March 2002 to launch the African Rice Initiative. Nerica was already being adopted in several other countries, but the initiative sought to make the process more systematic, coordinate the efforts of an increasing number of donors and reach countries beyond WARDA's 17 member states in West Africa.

By mid-2003, one or more Nerica varieties had been released in 10 West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo). In Central Africa, Gabon's extension service has begun to promote Nerica, while Uganda, in East Africa, has released a variety of Nerica that was specifically developed in that country. Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania are currently evaluating several Nerica varieties.

Mr. Nwanze notes that the potential in Nigeria, his own country, is particularly great. Nigeria alone accounts for about half of the 840,000 hectares of land under rice cultivation in West Africa. President Olusegun Obasanjo "is taking special interest" in Nerica, observes Mr. Nwanze, and has established a presidential committee on rice. The African Development Bank has announced that it will help finance further dissemination of Nerica varieties in Nigeria, as part of a $31 mn Bank programme in seven countries.

African farmers' excitement over Nerica is eliciting growing enthusiasm among donors, development agencies and research institutions as well. A few years after WARDA first developed Nerica, the government of Japan embraced it as an example of Asian-African cooperation and provided support for its dissemination. A Japanese non-governmental organization known as the Motherland Academy, which for 20 years has been sending Japanese rice to famine-stricken areas of Africa, decided in 2002 to help farmers in Mali grow Nerica rice varieties.

The African Development Bank, UN Development Programme, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, World Bank, European Union and numerous bilateral donor agencies and foundations also have supported Nerica activities. WARDA, says Mr. Nwanze, is not only a model of regional cooperation in West Africa, "but also a model of collaborative partnership — we have Africans, Asians, Latin Americans and Europeans."

Through this collective effort, the African Rice Initiative aims, by 2006, to increase the total area cultivated under Nerica from 24,000 hectares (in 2002) to 210,000 hectares. At Nerica's average yields, this should bring in about 750,000 tonnes annually, permitting African countries to spend $90 mn less on rice imports.

Peace and policies

For African rice farmers to be able to fully realize Nerica's potential benefits, a number of obstacles need to be tackled. Achieving peace is one of them, both for farmers to grow their crops and for agricultural scientists to conduct their research.

Before the 1990s, WARDA was headquartered in Monrovia, Liberia. But the outbreak of a devastating civil war at the start of that decade brought the destruction of its research laboratories and local seed banks, and forced the centre to move to Côte d'Ivoire. WARDA invested $30 mn in its new location, but with the eruption of civil war in Côte d'Ivoire in September 2002, "we have been dislodged again," reports Mr. Nwanze. Its scientists now work from Bamako, Mali, with the management and

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Agriculture: Africa's 'engine for growth'

Small-scale farmers hold the key, says NEPAD plan

By Ernest Harsch

After decades of economic stagnation and with the number of chronically malnourished people now reaching 200 million, Africa's leaders are intensifying efforts to find "sustainable solutions" to hunger and poverty, says Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. The main framework for that undertaking, he notes, is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which emphasizes that "agriculture will provide the engine for growth in Africa."

To give greater substance to that goal, NEPAD's promoters held a series of consultations with African agriculture ministers and the heads of African regional economic groups, the African Development Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, as well as experts from the World Bank and especially the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Together, they developed the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), released in July 2003.

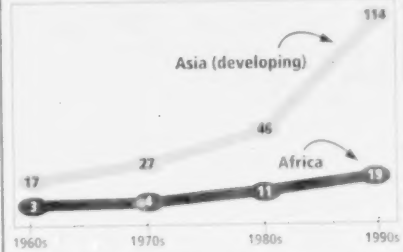
The plan states that the high economic growth rates envisaged by NEPAD cannot be realized unless farm production is significantly increased. Higher output will directly reduce hunger and bring down the cost of food imports. It will also have wider economic benefits, from stimulating rural incomes to providing raw materials for African industry. "Investing in the reduction of hunger is a moral imperative," says the CAADP, "but it also makes economic sense."

Since the hindrances facing African farmers are numerous, the solutions must be comprehensive, requiring sustained action across many different fronts. Above all, says the plan, African governments and their external partners must support the labours of Africa's millions of poor, small-scale farmers.

Building on local successes

The rural locality of Tonka, in northern Mali, is an example of the endeavours that villagers in Africa are already making, despite extremely adverse conditions. By digging simple irrigation canals from a local river and lake, Tonka's 4,500 producers, organized in village cooperatives, have been able to increase their output of rice, millet, sorghum, potatoes, cassava, beans and other foods. Tonka's marketplaces now attract buyers from other regions in Mali, and even from across the border in neighbouring Mauritania. Thanks to the additional incomes they have earned, Tonka's residents have been able, during the past four years, to help finance the construction of nine primary schools, four health clinics, several wells, two livestock markets, a warehouse and several sanitation facilities.

Investments in irrigation, US $ bn



Source: UN Africa Recovery from NEPAD data

Where such success stories exist, acknowledges the CAADP, the challenge facing African leaders will be to find ways to strengthen them and duplicate their experiences in other localities and countries. Where there are few successes to build on, new initiatives and programmes will need to be promoted.

The plan's drafters affirm that it is not a blueprint, and that its vision must be adapted to the specific problems of particular regions and countries. Nor is it a shopping list of projects. "Its main purpose is to sensitize policymakers to the need to act on selected fronts in order to make a quick difference to Africa's agricultural malaise." It therefore concentrates on what it calls the three "pillars" for short-term action, plus a fourth long-term pillar. These are:

- extending the land area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems
- increasing food supply and reducing hunger
- improving rural infrastructure and capacities for market access
- promoting, over the long term, agricultural research and technology dissemination.

A continent in crisis

African agriculture is in crisis, the CAADP affirms, and that situation "demands a crisis response." Although urbanization is increasing rapidly, agriculture still provides livelihoods for about 60 per cent of the continent's active labour force, contributes 17 per cent of Africa's total gross domestic product and accounts for 40 per cent of its foreign currency earnings.

Yet farmers' yields have essentially stagnated for decades. Although total output has been rising steadily — often by simply extending the land area under cultivation — this growth has barely kept pace with Africa's increasing population. Food production in particular has lagged, so that the number of chronically undernourished people increased from 173 million in 1990-92 to 200 million in 1997-99, the latest years for which accurate figures are available. Of that total, 194 million were in sub-Saharan Africa. This growth in hunger has come despite high levels of food imports — costing $18.7 bn in 2000 alone.

The reasons for such stagnation are multiple, says the CAADP: continuing dependence on uncertain rainfall, nutritional deficiencies in Africa's soils, small and dispersed domestic markets, the instability and decline of world prices for African agricultural exports, the small size of most farms, farmers' frequent lack of

organization, the lack of rural roads, neglect of the particular needs of women farmers (who produce most of the continent's food), and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Government agricultural policies also have been poor, providing only weak economic incentives to rural producers. Privatization and other structural adjustment policies led to an "over-hasty withdrawal" of the state from direct production. In the absence of a sound private sector, this caused "severe dislocation of production, farm trade and farmer support services."

Agriculture also has been starved of investment. Many African governments devote less than 1 per cent of their budgets to agriculture. Not only have overall donor aid levels declined, but donor priorities have simultaneously shifted away from agriculture toward other sectors. Worldwide, the amount of aid allocated to primary agriculture declined from $11 bn in 1990 to $7.4 bn in 1998. The decline has been especially sharp in the case of the World Bank, which provided 39 per cent of its total lending to agriculture in 1987, but only 7 per cent in 2000.

Although available financial resources should be managed better, the CAADP acknowledges, overall investments in agriculture need to be drastically increased if Africa is to pull out of its agricultural crisis. The four pillars highlighted in the plan will require $251 bn in investments between 2002 and 2015 (see table). Although an ambitious amount, the annual average of $17.9 bn is less than the continent spends each year on food imports. The plan expects that Africa will be able to mobilize about half of the total amount from its own resources, with its share gradually increasing as the continent strengthens its domestic capacities.

Boosting yields

Much can be done to increase African farm yields through simple methods of improving soil fertility and better utilizing the continent's available water. Currently, only 12.6 mn hectares of agricultural land are under managed systems of water and land development. The vast bulk of farmland is left to the vagaries of weather, including insufficient rainfall and flooding that may strip away topsoils, as well as unsustainable farming methods that gradually deplete soil nutrients.

Some 874 mn hectares of land are deemed suitable for agriculture, but 83 per cent of that area is subject to serious limitations such as poor soil fertility. About 16 per cent of Africa's soils are categorized as "low nutrient," compared with just 4 per cent in Asia. Each year, the depletion of existing soil nutrients brings crop losses estimated at between $1 bn and $3 bn.

These nutrients are not being replaced. Total fertilizer input in sub-Saharan Africa is just 9 kilogrammes per hectare, compared with 100 kg in South Asia, 135 in East and Southeast Asia, 73 in Latin America and 206 in the industrialized countries. The CAADP calls for an integrated approach that combines much greater use of organic matter and mineral fertilizers, higher-yielding hybrid seeds, small-scale irrigation and other methods.

Required investments in African agriculture, 2002-2015

Activity	US$ bn
Land and water investment	37
operations and maintenance	32
Rural infrastructure investment	89
operations and maintenance	37
Trade-related capacities	3
National food security	6
Regional food security	1
Research and technology	5
Humanitarian safety nets	42
Total	251

Source: Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme

The plan notes that just 7 per cent of arable land in Africa is under irrigation (with 40 per cent of that land area in North Africa). As with fertilizer use, Africa's utilization of irrigation pales in comparison with other regions: the share of irrigated farmland in South America stands at 10 per cent, in East and Southeast Asia at 29 per cent and in South Asia at 41 per cent.

While the CAADP points to the need to upgrade and rehabilitate existing large-scale irrigation schemes, and to develop new ones, it emphasizes in particular the importance of promoting small-scale efforts within the reach of poor farmers. Through a combination of approaches, it hopes to increase the area of irrigated farmland from 12.6 mn hectares to 20 mn by 2015.

While raising agricultural productivity across-the-board is essential for reducing rural poverty and stimulating economic growth, focusing on food supply — another of the plan's pillars — is indispensable for combating hunger. One-third of sub-Saharan Africa's population is chronically hungry. On average, cereal yields in Africa reached just 1,230 kg per hectare in 2001, compared with 3,090 kg in Asia, 3,040 kg in Latin America and 5,470 kg in the European Union.

In addition to boosting the yields of staple food crops, better "safety nets" also need to be put in place to protect poor people during times of calamity, such as drought, flooding or the ravages of war, argues the CAADP.

Roads and marketplaces

In Sikorola, a village in western Burkina Faso, farmers generally benefit from adequate rains and more fertile soils. But their efforts to expand output are hampered by the area's very poor physical infrastructure. "We are ready to produce more maize and potatoes," says one member of the Siguizani family, "but there is no road to transport the crop."

Sikorola is not unusual. Across Africa, paved rural roads scarcely exist. Much produce is taken to market by cart or bicycle over unpaved roads or by foot along narrow paths cut through the brush. Africa has the lowest density of paved roads of any world region. Out of 1.8 mn kilometres of roads in sub-Saharan Africa, only 16 per cent are paved.

Moreover, many of Africa's paved roads have deteriorated badly from overuse and inadequate maintenance. Because of poor road quality, lorry drivers in rural Cameroon may charge an extra CFA1,000-CFA2,000 (US$1.70-$3.40) for just a short trip of 6 kilometres. Higher transport costs raise the prices farmers must charge, reducing their competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.

Because farmers will not have much incentive to grow more without the roads, storage facilities and other physical infrastructure they need to market their crops, the CAADP urges that more than half of the investments projected under the plan be directed toward rural infrastructure (not counting irrigation systems). In addition to roads and other "hard" infrastructure, the CAADP argues, farmers also need "soft" infrastructure: communications and accurate price and market information in order to take the best advantage of changing market opportunities.

External markets also are vital for many of Africa's producers of cotton, cocoa, coffee, tea and other export crops. Yet world market conditions have not been favourable to African

To make it worthwhile for farmers to produce more, they need enough decent roads to get their crops to market

farmers. Not only are international agricultural prices volatile, but African exports face restrictions on access to Northern markets and are severely hurt by the high subsidies paid to rich farmers in the industrialized countries.

"It is an irony," notes the NEPAD agricultural plan, "that many African countries have largely internalized the perspective that a dynamic and sustainable agricultural economy cannot be based on subsidies; yet their agricultural systems continue to be undermined by the subsidies paid out in precisely the developed countries that are the main proponents of liberalization."

Technology for development

To succeed, Africa's efforts to boost agricultural output must also rely on greater use of science and technology, the plan's fourth, long-term pillar. Currently, only about 20 per cent of cropland in Africa is sown with improved cereal varieties. Many new varieties of maize and rice have been developed in laboratories, but must be better adapted to Africa's environmental conditions, as in the case of the New Rice for Africa (see page 10). Research has shown that improved varieties of millet, sorghum and other traditional African grains can also significantly boost yields. Beyond seeds, farmers need access to animal health remedies, safe pesticides and other inputs, as well as training in agro-forestry and various skills.

Africa's agricultural research institutes and extension services have very little capacity to engage in new scientific research or get existing technologies out into farmers' fields. In part, such problems can be overcome by finding new ways to generate and handle scientific knowledge, says the CAADP. Farmers themselves should be more closely involved in both research and dissemination.

Mr. Pedro Sanchez, director for tropical agriculture at Columbia University's Earth Institute, agrees. The days of fenced-off research plots are gone, he told *Africa Recovery*. Instead, researchers must "start with participation," by listening to what farmers themselves have to say. Existing agricultural extension services must also change the way they operate, said the soil fertility specialist, who was the winner of the World Food Prize in 2002 and is currently a co-chair of the Millennium Project Hunger Task Force, a UN advisory group. "We need to blur the differences between research and extension," Mr. Sanchez said.

While changes in functioning are important, says the CAADP, so too is greater financing. Public spending on agricultural research rose rapidly between 1961 and 1976, but stagnated during the 1980s and 1990s, at around $1.2 bn annually. African agricultural research institutes meanwhile became more dependent on donor financing, which rose from 28 per cent of the total in 1986 to about 40 per cent today.

Overall spending on agricultural research should double within 10 years, says the NEPAD agricultural plan. To achieve that, research and extension services will need to diversify their sources of financing, increasing not only allocations from national budgets and donor agencies, but also by tapping the private sector, selling consultancy services to producers' organizations, deriving income from patents and urging governments to place levies on commodity sales.

With adequate resources, says the plan, it will be much easier to build "a pluralistic and integrated system of agricultural research, extension and education that are responsive and accountable to farmers, agribusiness, consumers and other stakeholders." ■

Farmers embrace African 'miracle' rice

from page 12

support staff operating in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire's commercial capital. Fortunately, by quickly interceding with the government, UN and French peacekeeping forces, WARDA was able to ensure that its Ivorian facilities were not attacked by any of the belligerents. Nevertheless, the conflict, coming just as Nerica was picking up steam, derailed the promotion campaign there.

Supportive agricultural policies also are vital, Mr. Nwanze explains. Governments must invest more in agriculture, while at the same time "devolving responsibility to the private sector." Farmers need incentives to produce, rice processors and sellers require a profitable environment, some system of quality control needs to be in place to ensure reasonable standards and public awareness campaigns could help consumers appreciate Nerica's qualities. Nigeria, Mr. Nwanze reports, has set out an ambitious agenda to reform the entire rice sector, "from producers to millers to processors and traders."

Historically, Mr. Nwanze points out, local rice production in West Africa has been competitive and profitable. However, with the widespread importation of cheap non-African rice — often subsidized by rice exporting countries — "local prices become unattractive." Governments therefore "need to put in place policies that will encourage farmers to invest in rice," Mr. Nwanze says. Nigeria, for example, has imposed a high tariff on imported rice in order to encourage domestic production.

With favourable conditions, Nerica has the potential not only to strengthen agriculture in Africa, but also beyond. "The new rice for Africa," notes a WARDA document, "may also help farmers who grow upland rice" in Asia and Latin America. ■

'Africa has come of age'

General Assembly debates New Partnership, peace efforts

Nearly a year after the UN General Assembly first endorsed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the body convened again on 15-16 October to review the plan's progress. Delegate after delegate, from poor and rich countries alike, noted the many difficulties and challenges facing Africa, but also found signs of improvement, notably a modest rise in donor assistance to Africa and progress towards peace in some of the continent's most deadly armed conflicts.

NEPAD, noted Kenyan Attorney General Amos Wako, represents an assertion of Africa's commitment to take charge of its own affairs. It is "an African initiative that sends a signal that Africa has come of age . . . and takes primary responsibility for her development and destiny."

UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa Ibrahim Gambari underlined that point in a briefing on the eve of the General Assembly debate. "The Africans are saying for a change: 'We want to take ownership of our problems. We are defining our priorities and we are taking steps to implement those programmes.'"

'NEPAD in action'

Practically every participant in the debate cited the creation of the African Peer Review Mechanism as one of NEPAD's most significant, tangible achievements so far. Under the mechanism, participating African countries agree to review and learn from each other's experiences in promoting good governance, sound economic management and respect for human rights. "We applaud the progress" made by Africa in establishing the mechanism, said Ambassador Marcello Spatafora of Italy, speaking on behalf of the European Union. He urged other African countries to join the 16 that have already acceded to the mechanism.

While welcoming such external expressions of support, Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo of South Africa emphasized that the mechanism — a "novel and courageous process" — was not designed to please Africa's external partners. "Rather," he said, "it was Africa's own effort of seeking good governance for itself and not as a means to appeal to the international community."

Overall, NEPAD is "still in its infancy," noted Foreign Minister Leonardo Santos Simão of Mozambique, speaking for the African Union. Nevertheless, he added, a number of regional NEPAD projects are already being promoted, including construction of a gas pipeline from Nigeria to other West African countries and links between the electricity grids of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia. These, plus "many others in the pipeline," represent "NEPAD in action."

A few delegates noted that NEPAD still faces a challenge in gaining understanding and support within Africa. "NEPAD is not without its flaws," said Mr. Amare Tekle, a foreign affairs adviser in the office of Eritrea's president. He cited frequent criticisms from African academics and civil society organizations, many of which question their governments' commitment to good governance or believe that NEPAD reflects an uncritical acceptance of globalization. Moreover, he added, "Many in Africa are sceptical that the developed countries will translate pledges of assistance into concrete action."

Peace and development

Development in Africa will not be possible without peace, nor peace without development, the delegates noted. Some pointed to recent progress towards resolving conflicts in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan and elsewhere as evidence that Africa may be on the way to a more peaceful future. Others emphasized that the improvements have been slow and erratic, and that far too many countries remain mired in war and other forms of civil strife.

Stressing the importance for Africa of strengthening its own capacities to prevent and resolve conflicts, Nigerian Foreign Minister Saidu Balarabe Sunaila added that such efforts

Ambassador Papa Louis Fall of Senegal: Africa was disappointed in the breakdown of the World Trade Organization talks in Cancún.

Attorney General Amos Wako of Kenya: "Africa has come of age and takes primary responsibility for her development and destiny."

"We applaud the progress" made in establishing the African Peer Review Mechanism, said Ambassador Marcello Spatafora of Italy.

NEPAD is "still in its infancy," noted Foreign Minister Leonardo Santos Simão of Mozambique.

"should not be used as an excuse for the international community to shrink from playing an active role in the search for peace in Africa." He said that international "indecision and inaction" had contributed to repeated conflicts in Guinea-Bissau and Liberia.

Ambassador Marc Nteturuye of Burundi, pointing to the difficulties of building up the troop strength of an Africa Union peacekeeping force in his country, asked: "Why are the rich countries hesitating to give financial and logistical support to those African countries trying to dispatch troops?"

Post-conflict reconstruction

Beyond ending actual fighting, the struggle for peace in Africa also will require greater African and international assistance for post-conflict reconstruction and development, Ambassador Teruneh Zenna of Ethiopia told the Assembly. "Adequate resources must be provided to ensure the implementation of disarmament measures, including weapons collection, demobilization and reintegration programmes." Above all, he added, financing must also be allocated to rebuilding infrastructure, restoring social services and developing income-generating programmes.

In his briefing, Mr. Gambari also emphasized that point. Despite progress in resolving African conflicts, he said, "the bigger challenge is how to maintain peace in those countries that have recovered from war," including by effectively tackling their development challenges.

Aid and debt

While Africa is trying to take the driver's seat, the continent still needs support from its external partners, given the widespread poverty and limited capacities of most African countries, many General Assembly speakers pointed out. They were therefore encouraged by the news, in a report on NEPAD's implementation by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, that donor assistance to Africa has begun to recover. Between 2000 and 2002 it rose modestly from $16.4 bn to $18.6 bn. Although this marks an end to the steady decline in aid during the previous decade, the latest figure is still well below the $26.6 bn received in 1990.

While Africa is trying to take the driver's seat, the continent still needs support from its external partners, given the widespread poverty and limited capacities of most African countries.

Ambassador Kumalo of South Africa said that his country appreciates the recent increase in aid to Africa. But since overall aid levels remain low, he said that it is also important to improve the effectiveness of the aid that is provided. This is an issue donors are also emphasizing, Mr. Kumalo noted, a stance that, however, "contrasts sharply with the reluctance by some donor countries to untie certain types of aid." By continuing to link aid disbursements to the purchase of goods and services from the donor country, he said, there is a risk that "the concept of aid efficiency would become a mere slogan which is applied selectively."

Mr. Masashi Mizukami of Japan's permanent mission to the UN argued that more international assistance should be invested in developing "the skills and abilities of people in Africa. Japan believes that Asia-Africa cooperation . . . can contribute a lot to capacity building in Africa."

Delegates also cited the need for greater debt relief. The debt "is still an unbearable burden," said ambassador Martin Belinga Eboutou of Cameroon, even for countries that have benefited from debt reduction under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative. Many African representatives supported a proposal that an international conference on African debt be held next year.

'Disappointment' at trade talks failure

Whatever financial benefits Africa may get from aid or debt relief, many ambassadors pointed out, these have been virtually wiped out by the losses the continent has suffered in the realm of trade. In particular, they criticized developed countries' barriers to African products and the high domestic subsidies they pay to their own farmers, which have tended to depress international prices for cotton and other key African agricultural exports.

Senegalese Ambassador Papa Louis Fall expressed his country's "massive disappointment" at the breakdown of the World Trade Organization's talks in Cancún a month earlier. Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna of Morocco, speaking on behalf of the developing countries' Group of 77 and China, noted the "devastating impact" that volatile commodity prices and Northern agricultural subsidies, especially in cotton, have had on Africa's development prospects.

Inconsistency

The failure of Cancún, combined with the "cotton scandal," have revealed the inconsistency of the industrialized countries in international trade talks, Mr. Bennouna said: "on one hand, developed countries call for a reinforced and general liberalization of trade in African countries to the extent of imposing it through other multilateral institutions, and on the other hand, developed countries show no sign of openness concerning the legitimate claims and urgent needs of African countries."

Among several other delegates from developed countries, French Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sablière "profoundly regretted" the failure of Cancún and urged further efforts to achieve multilateral trade agreements that would improve Africa's export prospects. Senator Susan Knowles of Australia said that her country has "long advocated ending farm subsidies in developed countries. Not only are these subsidies hugely expensive — more is spent on them than Africa's combined economic output — they are also highly damaging to Africa's development prospects." She urged the creation of "a fair international trading system in agricultural products." ■

UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa Ibrahim Gambari: "The Africans are saying for a change: 'We want to take ownership of our problems.' "

Ambassador Martin Belinga Eboutou of Cameroon: The debt "is still an unbearable burden," for Africa.

Africa pushes for better aid quality

Donors must also be held accountable for their policies and practices

To make the best use of limited aid flows to Africa, the continent's leaders are calling on donors to join in efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of the aid that is given. They are urging Africa's development partners to achieve greater efficiency in aid delivery, align donor programmes with African development plans, improve donors' coordination with each other and better integrate aid policies with action in such areas as global trade and debt relief.

By *Michael Fleshman*

For most of the past 40 years, Africa's debate with the international community over economic aid has focused largely on the amount of official development assistance (ODA) available and the economic, social and political conditions that must be met to obtain it. This is understandable, since donor conditions have sometimes forced recipient governments to cut vital health, education and infrastructure budgets, and the current level of global ODA — about $57 bn annually — is less in absolute terms than it was a decade ago. Despite increases in development aid in recent years, that amount is only about half what economists estimate is needed to achieve the internationally agreed development targets contained in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The absence of resources for investment in health, education, industrial and rural development and transport and communications is generally recognized as the single greatest obstacle to achieving the MDGs in Africa and other poor regions. Yet on 30 October, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the General Assembly that in 2002 developing countries transferred almost $200 bn more to the developed world in debt service payments, profit remittances, and other transactions than they received from all sources, including aid, private investment and debt relief. It was the sixth consecutive year poor countries have been net exporters of capital to wealthy regions and the largest such outflow on record. "Funds that should be promoting investment and growth in developing countries, or building schools and hospitals, or supporting other steps towards the Millennium Development Goals," he lamented, "are instead being transferred abroad."

To make the best use of the limited resources available, African leaders "in the spirit of mutual accountability and responsibility that is embedded in NEPAD," the New Partnership for Africa's Development, called in November 2002 for donors to join with them to improve aid *quality*. The statement, issued at the end of a meeting of the NEPAD heads of state Implementation Committee, urged Africa's partners to achieve greater efficiency in aid delivery, align donor programmes with national plans, improve donors' coordination with each other and better integrate ODA with donor policies in such areas as global trade and debt relief. The leaders urged the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the association of industrialized countries, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), to "urgently conclude" discussions on ways to hold donors as well as recipients accountable for their commitments and improve aid effectiveness.

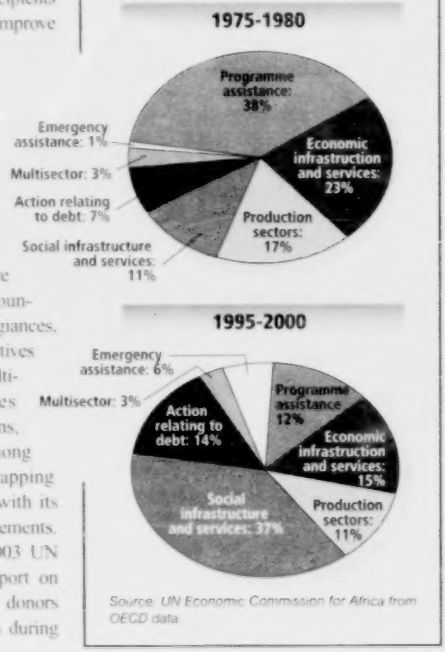
Donors 'not cooperating'

It is an ambitious undertaking, given the inherent imbalance of power between rich and poor, and the domestic political considerations that sometimes drive aid decisions in wealthy countries. During the Cold War, ODA was often provided to secure commercial advantages in recipient countries or as a reward for ideological allegiances, instead of achieving development objectives on the ground. Donor countries and multilateral lending agencies sometimes imposed conflicting conditions on loans, while the absence of cooperation among bilateral donors often produced overlapping projects in the same sector — each with its own reporting and administrative requirements.

In Tanzania, notes a November 2003 UN Development Programme (UNDP) report on development effectiveness, some 40 donors maintained 2,000 separate aid projects during the 1980s. This created a "chaotic" situation and a vast administrative burden on the government, but achieved little sustainable development on the ground. According to World Bank President James Wolfensohn, the problem is a global one. Addressing a February 2003 donors meeting in Rome, he noted that since 1992 more than 400,000 separate development projects have been initiated around the world, and that 80,000 are currently underway. "This is ridiculous," he said. "We're not cooperating. We're not coordinating. We're not learning from the experiences of others, and in some cases we're not even learning from our own experience." If the world is to reach the MDGs by 2015, he continued, improving aid quality and forging genuine partnerships between developed and developing countries is essential. "If we go on the way we're going, we're really not going to make a hell of a lot of progress."

Happily, Tanzania has gone from being a case study of the need for improved aid quality

Aid to Africa:
more for social, less for economic



Source: UN Economic Commission for Africa from OECD data

to a laboratory of how best to achieve it. In the mid-1990s, the government appointed an independent commission to study ODA programmes and recommend reforms. Its findings brought a reduction in the number of projects and increased the channelling of development funds through the national budget, which reduced paperwork and made resource flows more predictable and flexible. In 2002 the government published the Tanzania Assistance Strategy, which clearly defined its relationship with donors and led to the creation of a joint donor-government secretariat to monitor development programmes and further improve donor coordination and mutual accountability.

German aid project in Tanzania. The Tanzanian government has made progress in getting different donors to better coordinate their activities.

The Tanzanian experience and similar initiatives under way in Senegal, Uganda, Mozambique, Ghana and other countries are indications that both recipient and donor countries are beginning to "get it" about aid quality, the former development minister of the Netherlands, Ms. Eveline Herfkens, told *Africa Recovery*. For 15 years, ODA budgets in wealthy countries declined, she noted. "Now governments are under pressure to increase aid pledges to meet the MDGs, and they realize they can get more 'bang for the buck'" by improving aid effectiveness.

Charged with mobilizing international support for the MDGs in her capacity as the UN's executive coordinator for the MDG Campaign, Ms. Herfkens asserted that half of ODA funds are being wasted by "leakage" of aid to middle-income countries, donor-driven projects outside developing countries' poverty reduction and development strategies, and lack of capacity in recipient governments. Greater accountability by all parties, she said, "would add much more value to current levels of ODA."

Also, Ms. Herfkens added, improved aid effectiveness would accelerate progress towards the MDG targets, which include a reduction by half in the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015 (see *Africa Recovery*, October 2003). Donor support for social services vital to the MDGs, such as health and education, has risen in recent years, although the increase has come at the expense of investment in productive sectors and programme assistance, which includes balance of payments and budget support (see graphs, page 18).

Mutual accountability and coherence

For their part, African governments have sought to institutionalize mutual reviews of development programmes with their partners and improve cooperation or "harmonization" among donors to reduce waste, duplication and administrative costs. Development agencies like the ECA and the World Bank have also called on African and donor governments to achieve greater policy coordination, or "coherence," to ensure that the various activities of the state, including health, education, agriculture, trade, investment, defence and budgeting reinforce development objectives and not conflict with or nullify each other. In a progress report to African finance ministers in June 2003, the ECA argued that only a process of mutual accountability could ensure that both sides keep their commitments and make maximum use of ODA.

For Africa, the principal means to improve aid effectiveness is NEPAD, which commits African governments to:

- promote sound macro-economic policies
- combat corruption
- respect human rights, democracy and good governance
- pursue the MDGs in national development strategies
- improve the domestic business climate to attract private investment.

Monitoring these commitments is the purpose of NEPAD's voluntary African Peer Review Mechanism (see *Africa Recovery*, February 2003), through which African countries are to assess each other's progress on governance issues. To date, 16 governments have agreed to participate.

Donor commitments made at the 2000 Millennium Summit and the 2002 Monterrey, Mexico, financing for development conference include:

- increasing the amount of ODA available for achieving the MDGs
- achieving better alignment of donor priorities with national development strategies
- reducing duplication and reporting requirements
- improving the predictability and timeliness of aid disbursements
- strengthening recipient "ownership" of the development process by expanding developing country technical capacity, reducing the number of expatriate consultants and eliminating requirements that recipient countries purchase project-related goods and services from donor countries, a reform known as "untying" aid.

Donor performance is currently assessed by other donor governments, operating through the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (see box, page 20). But there are few opportunities for developed and developing countries to conduct joint assessments of aid programmes, and even fewer ways for African governments to hold their partners accountable for their commitments.

This is particularly true of policy coherence, an area where the ECA sees shortcomings by both African governments and their partners. An increase in military spending, for instance, may make it impossible for an African government to increase the budget for health and education programmes vital to progress on the MDGs.

The spread of democracy in Africa, together with better economic management and greater budget transparency, has improved policy coherence in many African countries in recent years.

The ECA finds less coherence in developed countries, however, as they continue to pursue a range of conflicting policies and objectives. US, European and Japanese farm subsidies, for example, have devastated the economies of many of the African countries they assist with rural development programmes. According to the UNDP development report, crop subsidies cost developing countries between $125 bn and $310 bn annually in lost sales and lower world prices — far more than they receive in ODA. Similarly, high tariffs on processed and manufactured products from Africa are common in industrialized countries, even though tariffs discourage private investment, job creation and economic diversification.

African governments have also called for greater support for African development priorities and the MDGs by the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral economic institutions. Despite improvements in some areas, however, "what we haven't seen in practice is a macro-economic framework that is really geared towards poverty reduction," UNDP economist Jan Vandermoortele told *Africa Recovery*. "Poverty reduction programmes very often ... have to be tailored and adjusted and downsized so that they fit into a macro-economic framework that is set before the word 'poverty' is even mentioned."

French President Jacques Chirac in Mali, with President Amadou Toumani Toure (in white robe). France has made aid to Africa a high priority.

Getty Images / AFP / Pierre Verdy

From 'adjustment' to 'partnership'

Nevertheless, the evolution of development models from the harsh austerity and zealous free market measures of the 1980s and 1990s to today's language of partnership and ownership has strengthened Africa's argument for a larger voice in the aid debate. NEPAD has further increased pressure on donors to match Africa's initiative and make the partnership a more equal one.

The greatest progress has been made in harmonizing and coordinating country-level donor programmes, and creating a venue for joint review and mutual accountability. In a declaration issued at the end of the February Rome meeting, the 76 countries and aid agencies in attendance acknowledged that the "wide variety of donor requirements and processes for preparing, delivering, and monitoring development assistance are generating unproductive transaction costs for and drawing down the capacities of partner countries." The statement further recognized that donor practices often run counter to recipients' national development priorities. "These issues require urgent, coordinated and sustained action to improve our effectiveness on the ground." An OECD task force has been established to work with the ECA to develop recommendations for improving country-level coordination among donors, with a follow-up meeting scheduled for 2005.

Work is also proceeding on the establishment of joint reviews. A number of consultations between ECA and OECD technical experts over the past year have produced agreement in principle for mutual reviews every two years. A new OECD entity, the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and Donor Practices, will provide a forum for direct developing-country participation in the process.

In the meantime, the technical groups will attempt to reach agreement on outstanding issues, including reconciling bilateral donor-recipient reviews with the NEPAD peer review process, maintaining African ownership of development within a framework of stronger international partnerships, and improving the accountability and coherence of independent multilateral bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO). Final recommendations

Aid effectiveness: How other donors assess the US

The US has the unusual distinction of being at once the OECD's largest contributor of development assistance, in dollar terms, and its smallest, when measured as a percentage of national income (see graph, page 21). Its aid policies were reviewed by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee in 2002. That assessment observed that "the United States has a substantial impact on promoting economic growth and reducing poverty in developing countries" because of its economic and political influence.

The study, conducted by representatives of two other OECD countries and the OECD Secretariat, noted, however, that the US government's ability to forge strong partnerships and improve coordination with other donors is severely hampered by the large number of government agencies that provide ODA — some 50 separate and largely autonomous bodies ranging from the State Department to the defence and health ministries. Competing agendas and the absence of a shared strategic vision, it asserted, "can leave the United States in a position of ad-hoc development decision-making." The report called for the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which currently controls only about half of Washington's aid budget, to be given greater authority over ODA disbursements.

The congressional practice of setting aside, or "earmarking," aid for specific countries and legislation requiring that most US development assistance be tied to the purchase of US goods and services further limits the effectiveness of Washington's aid programmes. These practices, the reviewers said, can sometimes be an "impediment" to stronger cooperation with donors and recipients, and direct assistance away from the countries in greatest need.

The failure to integrate aid, trade, defence and other aspects of US foreign policy into a coherent approach to developing countries reduced aid effectiveness and had "major repercussions" for poor countries' development prospects, the study noted. It recommended that USAID be given greater respon-

on a mutual review mechanism are expected to go to the NEPAD Implementation Committee and the OECD early in 2004.

National interests versus coherence

The collapse of the WTO meeting in Cancun over developing country demands for the end of Northern agricultural subsidies, better market access and reform of other inequitable trade policies (see *Africa Recovery*, October 2003), underscores the difficulty of aligning global trade and financial policies with national aid and development initiatives. Although it is widely acknowledged that subsidies and tariff barriers in particular are a major contributor to poverty in developing regions, many Northern governments fear the domestic political consequences of removing them.

The result, noted Ms. Herfkens, is that "there is going to be a delay at least in seriously addressing the issues of subsidies and market access." That, she said, "is very bad for the poor and particularly bad for Africa." Most of the poorest people, she noted, "live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture or related activities.... Continuing distortion of markets by subsidies is going to destroy rural livelihoods in Africa." The failure to eliminate trade barriers and subsidies in the world's richest markets, she continued, has an impact on many other aspects of development and further reduces the chances for the least developed countries to achieve the MDGs. "The whole issue of the sustainability of debt is related to your export income, which is related to your market access, so it's a vicious circle we are getting into here."

Addressing European parliamentarians in Paris in early October, Ms. Herfkens pointed to her own career in parliament and as a Dutch development minister, noting that despite nearly 20 years of discussion about increasing and improving aid, "we are discussing the same subjects today," without adopting reforms. The 2015 deadline for meeting the MDGs, she said, means that "we cannot say our cheque is still in the mail."

Parliamentarians, Ms. Herfkens argued, have a key role in improving the quality and quantity of development assistance by holding ministers accountable for commitments made at international conferences, ending trade-distorting subsidies and tariff barriers and insisting that ODA be delivered efficiently and effectively. Although each EU member state has promised to provide at least 0.39 per cent of its GNP as development aid by 2006 — a move she estimated would generate an additional $20 bn in ODA annually — only 8 of the 15 EU governments had deadlines for eventually reaching the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of GNP.

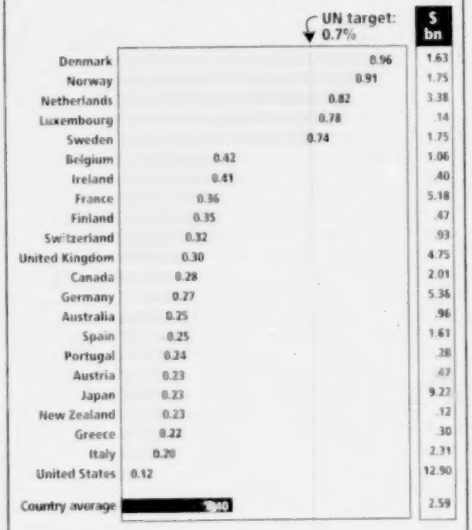
Improving aid quality in the meantime, she added, "could double the impact" of current spending. Untying aid alone, she noted, would add 30 per cent to the value of existing ODA. Standardizing and simplifying administrative procedures, channelling more aid through the national budgets of developing countries and making more multi-year commitments would strengthen local ownership of development. "We have ... to stop creating the absorptive capacity problems ourselves ... that some donors subsequently refer to as the reason not to increase aid."

'No excuses 2015'

Her task as director of the MDG campaign, Ms. Herfkens explained, "is making governments accountable. We are going to work closely with civil society and parliaments to make governments accountable to their people for their commitments." African governments, she asserted, had committed themselves "loud and clear" to the MDGs. Now is the time for those governments and their development partners to follow through. "The campaign is called 'no excuses 2015.' There can't be an excuse on any side."

Although the challenge is to ensure that governments abide by their MDG promises, Ms. Herfkens continued, she has no intention of flying into a country to lecture senior officials about their obligations. Her goal instead is to empower citizens in both developed and developing countries to hold their governments to account for the effectiveness of development programmes. Africa's economic prospects, she said, have been badly undermined by policies that make African governments more accountable to their donors instead of their own citizens. "We have to move away from that. Governments have to report to their own people." By mobilizing local civil society, social justice movements and parliamentarians, and finding links between local campaigns and the global MDG effort, she concluded, you build a movement for development for the long haul. "That saves people's lives if you succeed." ■

Official development assistance in 2002 (% of GNP)



Source: UN Africa Recovery from OECD data

sibility within the government for improving policy coherence and efficiency in ODA delivery. It urged the US to untie more of its aid and consider ways to better harmonize ODA priorities with recipients' poverty reduction and development strategies. Washington was urged to work with other OECD countries to reduce and standardize project reporting requirements and integrate development priorities more thoroughly into its overall foreign policy. Finally the OECD panel recommended that legal restrictions on USAID advocacy for ODA programmes be relaxed to strengthen public and parliamentary support for US development activities.

OECD peer reviews, observed Ms. Eveline Herfkens, UN MDG campaign coordinator and former Dutch development minister, "are terrific reports, serious and deep." Unfortunately, she said, too few policymakers and advocates know about them. After meetings with parliamentarians in 10 OECD countries, she said, "I was shocked by how few were aware of them." The reviews can be found on the OECD web page at: http://www.oecd.org/infobycountry/0,2646,en_2649_34603_1_1_1_1_37413,00.html

AFRICA AGENDA

16-21 January 2004, Mumbai (India) — World Social Forum. Website <www.wsfindia.org>.

21-24 January 2004, Florence (Italy) — Securing Treatment and Care for People Living with HIV. Website <http://www.promoleader.com/hiv_international_meeting>.

21-25 January 2004, Davos (Switzerland) — World Economic Forum, under the theme "Partnering for Security and Prosperity." E-mail <annualmeeting@weforum.org>.

4-7 February 2004, New Delhi (India) — Sustainable Development Summit 2004: Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Tel (91-11) 2468-2138, fax (91-11) 2468-2144, e-mail <dsds@teri.res.in>, website <http://www.teriin.org/dsds>.

18-20 February 2004, Vienna (Austria) — Global Forum on Sustainable Energy. Tel (1-212) 963-6890, fax (1-212) 963-7904, e-mail <freudenschuss-reichl@un.org>.

18-20 February 2004, Atlanta, Georgia (USA) — Globalization and Human Rights in Africa at the University of Georgia Center for Humanities. E-mail <aadinar@sas.upenn.edu>.

23-24 February 2004, London (United Kingdom) — Sustainable Development in the WTO. Tel (44-20) 7957 5710, fax (44-20) 7321 2045, e-mail <conferences@ria.org>, website <www.ria.org>.

27-28 February 2004, Atlanta, Georgia (USA) — International Conference on Women and Infectious Diseases, on the theme "from science to action." Website <http://www.womenshealthconf.org>.

4-6 March 2004, Rome (Italy) — International Forum on Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Contact Gloria Visconti, tel (39-06) 5722-8121, fax (39-06) 5722-8180, e-mail <Visconti.Gloria@minambiente.it>.

21-25 March 2004, Gaborone (Botswana) — CIVICUS World Assembly 2004. A venue for civil society and other stakeholders to exchange information. Contact David Kalete, e-mail <worldassembly@civicus.org>, website <http://www.civicus.org>.

29-30 March 2004, Manchester (United Kingdom) — International Sustainable Development Research Conference. Website <www.erpenvironment.org>.

14-18 April 2004, Madison, Wisconsin (USA) — African Literature Association 30th Anniversary conference. Tel (1-608) 262-4460, e-mail <asongolo@wisc.edu>, <tolaniyan@wisc.edu>.

26-30 April 2004, Marrakech (Morocco) — UNCTAD 8th Africa Oil and Gas, Trade and Finance Conference. Tel (41-22) 917-5770/5755, fax (41-22) 917-0509, e-mail <Lamon.Rutten@unctad.org>.

3-5 June 2004, Toulon (France) — 13th International Symposium on HIV & Emerging Diseases. Website <www.avps.org/2003/hiv.htm>.

11-16 July 2004, Bangkok (Thailand) — XV International AIDS Conference. Website <www.tas.se/aids2004/>.

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

1-3 December 2003, Nairobi (Kenya) — Workshop on Engendering PRSPs in Africa, organized by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the German Technical Cooperation. Website <www.gtz.de/gender-prsp>.

1-5 December 2003, Nairobi (Kenya) — DevMedicine 1st annual scientific conference on making information technologies available to medical professionals in developing countries. Tel (1-978) 476-9368, fax (1-978) 521-7251, e-mail <dmasc@devmedicine.com>.

8-13 December 2003, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — First Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water, under the aegis of the African Ministers' Council on Water. Tel (251-1) 443-422, fax (251-1) 510-350, e-mail <sdonkor@uneca.org> website <www.uneca.org/panafcon/>.

15-16 December 2003, Algiers (Algeria) — Partners' Conference on the Action Plan of the Environment Initiative of NEPAD. Website <www.touchtech.biz/nepad/files/en.html>.

AFRICA BOOKS

Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO by Richard Peet (Zed Books, New York, NY, US, 2003; 256 pp; $25.00)

Un autre sommet pour l'Afrique: Contre-voix citoyennes, Les Actes Agir Ici et Survie (Karthala, Paris, France, 2003; 224 pp; €17.10)

Re-examining Liberation in Namibia: Political Cultures Since Independence, ed. Henning Melber (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; 149 pp; $24.95; £15.95; €20; SEK200)

Political and Economic Liberalization in Zambia, 1991-2001 by Lise Rakner (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; 240 pp; $27.95; £16.95; €22; SEK220)

Transforming Mozambique: The Politics of Privatization, 1975-2000 by M. Anne Pitcher (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2003; 320 pp; $60)

Etat de la décentralisation en Afrique, Partenariat pour le Développement Municipal (Karthala, Paris, France, 2003; 364 pp; €26)

Nordic Countries and Africa: Old and New Relations, ed. Lennart Wohlgemuth (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; 53 pp; $16.95; £5.95; €8; SEK80)

Somalia: Economy Without State by Peter D. Little (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, US, 2003; 224 pp; hb $43.95; pb $18.35)

Question agraire et mondialisation: Point de vue du Sud, Alternatives Sud (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2002; 268 pp; £50; $55)

Local Women, Global Science: Fighting AIDS in Kenya by Karen M. Booth (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, US, 2003; 176 pp; hb $31.55; pb $31.55)

Blood, Land and Sex: Legal and Political Activism in Eritrea by Lyda Favalt and Roy Pateman (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, US, 2003; 376 pp; hb $43.95; pb $19.95)

Dealing with Conflict in Africa: The United Nations and Regional Organizations, ed. Jane Boulden (Palgrave, New York, NY, US, 2003; 356 pp; pb $49.95; hb $72.95)

Beyond Structural Adjustment: The Institutional Context of African Development, eds. Nicholas van de Walle, Nicole Ball and Vijaya Ramachandran (Palgrave, New York, NY, US, 2003; 324 pp; pb $22.95; hb $69.95)

Les économies en développement: à l'heure de la régionalisation, ed. Philippe Hugon (Karthala, Paris, France, 2003; 336 pp; €25)

Women and Work in Northern Nigeria: Transcending Boundaries by Renée Ilene Pittin (Palgrave, New York, NY, US, 2003; 488 pp; hb $90.95)

AIDS in the Twenty-First Century: Disease and Globalization by Tony Barnett and Alan Whiteside (Palgrave, New York, NY, US, 2003; 432 pp; pb $19.95; hb $29.95)

Against Global Apartheid: South Africa Meets the World Bank, IMF and International Finance by Patrick Bond (Zed Books, New York, NY, US, 2003; 352 pp; hb $75.00; pb $29.95)

Women and Land in Africa: Culture, Religion and Realizing Women's Rights by L. Muthoni Wanyeki (Zed Books, New York, NY, US, 2003; 200 pp; hb $75; pb $27.50)

Liberia – The Eye of the Storm: A Review of the Literature on Internally Displaced Refugees and Returnees by Desirée Nillson (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; 60 pp; $12.95; £5.95; €8; SEK80)

Environment, Power and Injustice: A South African History by Nancy J. Jacobs (Zed Books, New York, NY, US, 2003; 336 pp; hb $65.00; pb $24)

Nelson Mandela's Favorite African Folktales, ed. Nelson Mandela (W.W. Norton & Co., NY, US, 2002; 144 pp, hb $24.95)

Managing Common Property in an Age of Globalisation: Zimbabwean Experiences by Godfrey Chikowore, Manzungu Emmanuel et al (Weaver Press, Harare, Zimbabwe, 2003; 218 pp; pb £14.95; US$24.95)

Revenue Allocation for a Stable Democracy in Nigeria: Options and Challenges by Emmanuel Ating Onwioduokit (Africa Christian Press, Accra, Ghana, 2003; 163 pp; pb £16.95, $27.95)

Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Violence: Conflict Management, Human Rights, and Multilateral Regimes by Christian Scherrer (Ashgate Publishers, Hampshire, UK, 2003; 415 pp; hb £49.50)

Dispossessing the Widow: Gender Based Violence in Malawi, Women and Law in Southern Africa (Kachere Series, Zomba, Malawi, 2003; pb £9.95, $16.95)

AFRICA IN BRIEF

Pan-African Parliament is a step closer

In November, Senegal became the 24th member of the African Union (AU) to ratify the protocol establishing the continent's first Pan-African Parliament. By reaching that threshold, the protocol came into legal force. That in turn paves the way for the inaugural session of the body, scheduled for early 2004 at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

So far no country has yet won the right to host the parliament, but Egypt, Libya and South Africa have all expressed an interest. The parliament will only have consultative and advisory powers during its first five years of operation and serve as a venue for debates on issues affecting the continent. "We are trying to avoid the problems faced by similar parliaments by having this five-year experimental period," said AU spokesman Desmond Orjiako.

After that, it is envisioned that the body would evolve into the law-making arm of the AU, modeled on the European Union parliament, with full legislative powers. Every AU member country will provide five members to the parliament, one of whom must be a woman.

"Each member state will elect its representatives," said Mr. Orjiako. Immediately after Senegal ratified the protocol, South Africa became the first country to select its five participants, three of whom are women.

AU Chairman Alpha Oumar Konaré said the parliament will promote popular participation and democratic governance. It is one of 10 key AU organs, including a Central Bank, Court of Justice and Peace and Security Council. The AU succeeded the Organization of African Unity and is urging its members to expedite the creation of the new organs. ■

Information summit defers contentious issues

Leaders from 176 countries who met for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in December decided to establish a task force to explore setting up a Digital Solidarity Fund to finance the development of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in poor countries. The task force, to be appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan early this year, will review existing mechanisms for financing the development of such technologies and study the feasibility of setting up a fund. Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade has been lobbying for such a fund to bridge the "digital divide" between industrial and developing countries. However, industrial nations oppose the idea of establishing yet another global funding mechanism.

Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade proposed a "Digital Solidarity Fund."

The study group will report to the next WSIS summit, to be held in Tunisia in 2005. "We have been given one year to come up with the review, and it is up to us to convince those who don't see the necessity of building the fund, mainly the developed countries, so that we can reach consensus in Tunis in 2005," said Mr. Adama Samassekou, president of the WSIS Preparatory Committee.

"Telephones will not feed the poor, and computers will not replace textbooks," International Telecommunication Union Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi told delegates to the 10-12 December meeting in Geneva. "But ICTs can be used effectively as part of the toolbox for addressing global problems."

Management of the Internet was another contentious issue in Geneva. Currently, key decisions on domain names and addresses are made by a private US agency. Concerned about US domination of the medium, a group of developing countries, including South Africa, is lobbying for a neutral body, such as the UN, to be given control over Internet "governance." The WSIS meeting agreed to set up another panel to study the issue and propose a solution to the 2005 summit.

Delegates also debated whether governments should support open-source software like Linux over commercial ones like Microsoft's Windows. Mr. Samuel Guimarães, executive secretary in Brazil's foreign ministry, told the meeting that open-source (free-to-share) software is crucial for poorer countries, since it would permit them to freely develop their own technology, instead of purchasing it.

Two African projects, Time to Market and the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) won excellence awards presented to 40 finalists at the summit. Time to Market uses mobile telephones to provide market information on agriculture and fisheries in Senegal while WOUGNET is an online information resource on women's issues.

WTO members urge resumption of talks

Unexpectedly, the European Union has joined the Group of 21, a coalition of developing countries with which it had previously clashed, to call for a quick resumption of negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The G21, which includes Brazil, China, India and South Africa, disagreed with the EU at a failed WTO ministerial meeting in Cancún, Mexico, in September over curbs in farm subsidies, among other issues.

Following the collapse, talks were set to resume on 15 December. A few days before that deadline, the EU attended a G21 meeting in Brazil to jointly declare that there is "general agreement that we need to intensify negotiations early next year [2004]," in effect dropping the 15 December deadline. The aim is still to finalize the current round of trade talks by 2005. "The impression I had is that we [the EU and G21] not only want to pursue negotiations, but also to show some flexibility," said EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy. "If we start where we were [after Cancún], we will not succeed."

Divisions remain on the fundamental issues, however. "After two months of consultations," said Mauritius's WTO Ambassador Jaynarin Meetoo, "we have not been able to reach any agreement on the framework of agriculture or the framework of non-agriculture market access," among other deadlocked issues. ■

Health gap widens between rich and poor

Women in the poorest countries are more than 250 times more likely to die in childbirth than women in wealthy countries, while just 1 in 20 people in need of life-saving HIV/AIDS drugs in developing countries can access them. These statistics reflect a growing health gap between the wealthy North and the impoverished South, asserts the World Health Organization (WHO) in its 2003 *World Health Report*, and underscore the need for a global commitment to primary health care for all.

Health conditions in Africa are particularly critical, the report says. It notes that HIV/AIDS is now the leading cause of death and mortality rates for children under five are higher than they were a decade ago. ■

AFRICA WATCH

CORRUPTION

World endorses UN treaty

Nearly 100 countries signed the first internationally binding global treaty against corruption at a three day UN conference in Merida, Mexico, in December. The UN Convention against Corruption now needs to be formally ratified by 30 countries to come into force.

The agreement was negotiated over nearly two years by more than 125 countries and is expected to give a boost to the global fight against corruption. It contains more than 70 articles covering topics such as bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation, money-laundering, protection of whistle-blowers and cooperation among states.

For the first time in international law, the treaty "makes a major breakthrough by requiring member states to return assets obtained through corruption to the country from which they were stolen," said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "This is a particularly important issue for many developing countries where corrupt officials have plundered the national wealth."

Corruption is considered a major impediment to development and it is estimated that hundreds of billions of dollars are lost each year in corrupt transactions. "Corruption not only distorts economic decision-making, it also deters investments, undermines competitiveness and ultimately weakens economic growth," said UN Office on Drugs and Crime Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa.

Under the convention, signatories are required to adopt a number of measures to curb corruption, including codes of conduct and disciplinary measures for public servants and laws to criminalize bribery and money laundering. Mr. Costa said the "convention had teeth," in that it contains many binding aspects. ■

HUNGER

Africa faces food shortages

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported in December that 23 sub-Saharan African countries face food shortages in 2004. The causes range from continuing droughts in Somalia and other countries, including parts of Ethiopia and Tanzania, to civil conflict and its aftermath in Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola.

In Eritrea, despite improved weather conditions, an estimated 1.4 million people are expected to require emergency aid. As many as 5.5 million Zimbabweans, or about half the population, will need food aid due to shortages of seeds, fertilizers and fuel caused by the country's economic difficulties and the government's controversial land reform programme. Despite good harvests and the end of a long civil war in Angola, some 1.4 million returning refugees and internally displaced people will require assistance until they are resettled and can resume food production. ■

LOOTED ARTWORKS

Ethiopia awaits artefact's return

The Italian government is finally sending back to Ethiopia a 1,700-year-old obelisk that was looted from the ancient city of Axum during the 1930s by Italian soldiers. For Ethiopians, the return of the 24-metre-high granite structure, scheduled for early 2004, is long overdue. They have been campaigning for its return since a 1947 UN peace treaty between Ethiopia and Italy mandated that the obelisk, along with other articles looted from Ethiopia after October 1935, be sent back.

The move reflects increasing pressure on former colonial nations to return artworks they took from their former colonies. European museums are filled with such treasures. "This may be a starting point, really, for returning the cultural heritages of many countries," says Ethiopian Ambassador to Italy Mengistu Hulluka. "What has been the thinking in the past is no longer a reflection of the present." ■

APPOINTMENTS

The UN Secretary-General has appointed ***Mr. Jan Egeland*** *(right) as the new Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, effective 1 September 2003. Mr. Egeland has 25 years of experience in humanitarian, human rights and peace work, including as secretary-general of the Norwegian Red Cross, chairman of Amnesty International in Norway and Vice Chairman of the International Executive Committee of Amnesty International. From 1999 to 2002 he was Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Colombia.*

Mr. Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago *has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General as his new Special Representative for Sierra Leone, effective 1 December 2003. Mr. Mwakawago served for much of the past decade as Tanzania's permanent representative to the UN and previously held several ministerial positions in his country. In Sierra Leone, he succeeds Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji, who was recently appointed Nigeria's minister for foreign affairs.*

Promises to keep

In his New Year's message to the peoples of the world, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan affirmed his commitment to combating terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, but called on global leaders not to lose sight of a greater challenge, the war on poverty. "Without development and hope," he noted, "there will be no peace." Following are excerpts from his message:

Just over three years ago, at the Millennium Summit, leaders of all nations pledged to provide that hope. They set themselves precise, time-bound targets — the Millennium Development Goals. To meet these goals would cost only a fraction of what our world spends on weapons of war. Yet it would bring hope to billions, and greater security to us all. But in 2003 we did not live up to these promises. We let ourselves be swept along by the tide of war and division.

2004 must be different. It must be the year when we begin to *turn* the tide. We *can* turn the tide against HIV/AIDS, if we act on the "three-by-five" initiative — the World Health Organization's plan to get 3 million people on anti-retroviral treatment by 2005. It's a bold target, but it can be met — if rich countries, poor and afflicted countries, governments, civil society, the private sector, and the United Nations system all pull together — and if the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is fully funded.

We can turn the tide against *hunger*, if we all work together to make existing food stocks available to hungry people everywhere, and to help Africa produce the extra food it needs. And we can turn the tide in world *trade*, if governments do as they promised, and make the current round of negotiations a true "development round." We don't need any *more* promises. We need to start *keeping* the promises we already made.